GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:138
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2005
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY
Bansal Shri Pawan Kumar

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has prepared a National Environment Policy;

(b) if so, the salient features and objectives thereof;

(c) whether there is any proposal to associate the Panchayati Raj institutions with environment protection; and

(d) if so, the details of the forms of such association?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Environment & Forests has prepared a draft National Environment Policy.

(b) The draft NEP is a response to our national commitment to a clean environment, mandated in the Constitution. It recognizes that maintaining a healthy environment is not the state`s responsibility alone, but also that of every citizen. The NEP is also intended to help realize sustainable development by mainstreaming environmental concerns in all development activities. It briefly describes key environment challenges currently and prospectively facing the country, the objectives of environment policy, normative principles underlying policy action, strategic themes for intervention, broad indications of the legislative and institutional development needed to accomplish the strategic themes, and mechanisms for implementation and review.

The broad objectives of the policy are :- conservation of critical environmental resources, intra-generational equity: livelihood security for the poor, inter-generational equity, integration of environmental concerns in economic and social development, efficiency in environmental resource use, improved environmental governance and, enhancement of resources for environmental conservation.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) `Decentralization and empowerment of institutions at state and local levels` is one of the thrust areas of the draft policy. The state and local governments would be particularly encouraged to formulate their own strategies and action plans consistent with the NEP. The draft policy specifically provides for associating the Panchayati Raj Institutions with environmental protection by:

(i) giving greater legal standing to Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies to undertake monitoring of environmental compliance, and report violations to the concerned enforcement authorities,

(ii) giving legal recognition to the traditional rights of forest dwelling tribes taking into consideration the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).